



What should we do?

*Promote Equal Protections
Under the Law for Everyone...
or Promote Unequal Protections for Some?*

Some thoughts for your consideration

*by Dr. Vicki Holmes, candidate for City Council at Large
and Mayor Nancy DeBoer*

Dr. Vicki Holmes & Nancy DeBoer

The two questions above are ones many voters are wrestling with now, especially with respect to sexual identity and how Holland can claim to be fully “welcoming” if our friends and neighbors in the LGBTQ+ community are not granted legal “protected class” status in our city housing policies.

Like you, we want Holland to be a community where everyone is FREE AND INVITED to enjoy their PERSONAL FREEDOMS, each in their own way.

We want to do all in our power to create an environment in our city where everyone feels included, feels comfortable in expressing their sexual identity, and everyone’s rights and beliefs are respected.

We don’t want to set the stage for potentially inequitable and unjust legal consequences, so we must be careful not to create a negative situation in our attempt to do a good thing.

Here’s why.

Remember, our nation’s civil rights laws contain a uniquely powerful “burden of proof” provision, one which allows a member in a “protected class” (*ex. race, gender, age, and disability*) to shift the legal “burden of

proof” to the person they are accusing of discriminating against them.

This means a defendant in a civil rights case who is accused of discriminating against someone in a legally protected class is presumed to be “guilty until they can prove themselves innocent.”

To date, for every protected class, there are objective lines of identification for membership into that class, that are both documented and officially verifiable.

This is the first instance where membership in a potentially discriminated group (LGBTQ+) is both fluid and solely self-identified.

For example, it is possible for a person to say they are lesbian or gay or bisexual without any independent verification. This doesn’t make one’s identity any less real, but it does muddy the legal waters considerably.

It’s unfortunate the “burden of proof” shift is rarely discussed or presented.

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— Paid for by the Committee to Re-Elect Nancy DeBoer, 157 W. 40th St. Holland, MI 49423 and the Vote4Vicki Committee, 68 W. 17th St., Holland, MI 49423 —



NANCY DEBOER was first elected to City Council in 2005. She was elected Mayor for two 2-year terms, 2015 and 2017. Throughout Nancy’s tenure in office, she has been the only woman serving on our 9-member City Council.

DR. VICKI HOLMES is a tenured math professor at Hope College and is running for one of Holland’s Council-At-Large seats. Prior to teaching at the college level, Vicki was a public middle and high school teacher.



This is the key advantage that a legally defined and approved “protected group” is accorded under the law, as it stands in contrast to what happens in criminal cases (*ex. murder, theft, vandalism*), where defendants who are accused of breaking the law are considered “innocent until proven guilty” in court.

The “burden of proof” shift is that powerful.

We must make sure that we do not support a legal system where individuals are held liable for discrimination against a protected class which has a fluid and solely self-identified membership.

This would be inequitable.

So isn’t it reasonable to ask that future “protected class” designations and definitions be legally well thought-out and crystal clear?

Promoting legal clarity of this kind effectively protects everyone.

Even though our city’s Human Relations Commission has not received any discrimination complaints relative to LGBTQ+ in more than six years, we agree that now is the time to be proactive in addressing this issue.

Here’s a summary of our position as clearly as we can state it.

We believe Holland can be a fully inclusive and welcoming community, where everyone can express their PERSONAL FREEDOMS.

We believe NO ONE should ever be able to block or restrict the legal personal freedoms and beliefs of another, NOR should anyone ever be forced (or shamed) into embracing or promoting another’s personal freedoms and beliefs.

We believe we’re advocating for the best legal position for our city as well as advocating for the best way for all of us to keep improving how we live side-by-side as neighbors.

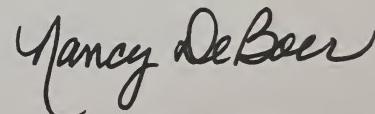
We do not have to choose a path that unintentionally fosters unequal protections for some.

Let’s support a more unifying dialogue and the creation of an action plan to better ensure the full equal protections of everyone.

Holland’s on the right course.

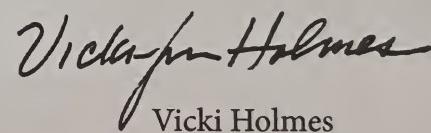
And together, we can make it even better.

Thank you!



Nancy DeBoer

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Vicki Holmes

Vicki Holmes

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City Council – At Large ♦ Tuesday, November 5

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**“Our future shines
brighter when we
EMPOWER, not entitle.”**

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